fare hike alleged' appearing in the Indian Express dated June 27, 1991; and

(b) if so, the corrective measures being taken for the convenience of the passengers ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The corrective measures being taken for the convenience of the passengers are :—

(i) The fare charges are displayed at prominent places near the booths;

(ii) Prompt action is taken against any complaint received;

(iii) To ensure accuracy and reliability, the system is now being computerised;

(iv) The Delhi Police are dropping the Zone system and the system of colony distance is being introduced;

(v) The pre-paid booths are being equipped with :

(a) Public announcements system;

(b) TV with teletext facility.

(vi) All pre-paid booths are proposed to be linked with MTNL net-work to ensure payment of voucher issued at one booth at any other booth in the city.

Suspension of Voluntary Retirement Scheme by S.T.C.

*116. SHRI LOKANATH CHOUDHURY : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the State Trading Corporation has decided to suspend the voluntary retirement scheme and to retrench the surplus staff;

(b) whether any assessment has been made of the surplus staff at the level of officers and staff; and

(c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) STC has temporarily suspended the Voluntary Retirement Scheme.

(b) and (c) STC has commissioned the National Productivity Council to conduct a study to identify the extent and nature of surplus staff.

[*Translation*]

Disbursement of Loans for Purchase of essential Commodities

*117. SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the amount of loans advanced by the public sector banks and other public financial institutions for the purchase of various essential commodities during the last three years and the estimated amount proposed to be advanced during the current year;

(b) whether there is any proposal to discontinue the advancing of loans

by these banks and financial institutions to the private wholesalers in order to leave them to carry on their business by mobilising their own resources;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI DALBIR SINGH) : (a) The commercial banks advance loans for the purchase of essential commodities as well as for financing operation of wholesale traders. The following table gives the outstanding advances of the Banks against the selected essential commodities like foodgrains, sugar, major oil seeds, etc. for the last 3 years : –

	Amount (Rs in crores)
March, 1988	1 722
March, 1989	2,128
March, 1990	2,424
February, 1991 (latest available)	2,400

The other public financial institutions do not advance loans for trading in essential commodities.

(b) No, Sir

(c) and (d) Does not arise

[*English*]

Sericulture Production

*118. DR. ASIM BALA : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) the steps taken to strengthen the basic infrastructure so as to increase the sericulture production:

(b) how these steps would protect the interest of small, marginal and landless agricultural labourers; and

(c) the number and type of projects being implemented in West Bengal alongwith their financial outlay and output achieved so far ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT) : (a) and (b) In order to supplement the efforts of the State Sericulture Departments for development of sericulture in the country, the Central Silk Board (CSB) has taken steps to set up a country-wide network of Units for providing R&D, Extension, Training and Infrastructural support to the industry. As a result of the steps taken, the silk recovery has improved resulting in higher economic returns to the farmer. Besides, the following schemes are being implemented for assisting small, marginal and landless farmers :—

(a) Supply of mulberry cuttings/ saplings at 50% cost.

(b) Free supply of rearing equipments to marginal farmers.

(c) Supply of nylon nets for Uzifly control at 50% cost.